

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide
Hebrews 8:1-13

History, Culture, & Context

In this section of Hebrews, we continue our examination of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and in chapter 8, how Jesus brings with Him a *New Covenant* which was prophesized by Jeremiah (see Jer.31:31-34).



In verses 1-6, we see that Jesus is the High Priest and Mediator who “sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.” This sanctuary is merely a “copy and shadow of what is in heaven.” Think back to the priests who offered sacrifices and worship in a tent, based upon the pattern given to Moses in Exodus 25:8, 9-40. This was the basis for the Old Covenant, which consisted of Tabernacle worship and the Ten Commandments established in Exodus. Jesus brings to us something more powerful and everlasting with the New Covenant! It is “...established on better promises.” (v.6)

In verses 7-13, we see how the New Covenant of Jesus differs from the Old. Verse 7 says, “For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.” This section of chapter 8 draws upon Jeremiah 31:31-34 to demonstrate how the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant. The Book of Hebrews Shepherd Notes explains: “Christ’s covenant with God’s people is superior in three ways: (1) it provided a new awareness of God’s laws and a new nature by which to obey God; (2) it gave a personal knowledge of God that inspired a loyalty and commitment to Him; and (3) it provided a complete forgiveness of sins (8:8-12).” Whereas the Old Covenant was written in stone upon the Ten Commandments, verse 10 explains “I will put my laws in their minds and write them in their hearts.”

In verse 13, we read: “By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.” Fritz Rienecker, in his *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, says of the word “Obsolete”: “This word means ‘To declare or treat as old or obsolete. ‘The word was used in the papyri for a temple and a wall which had become old and obsolete and needed repairing.” (p.692).

Questions to Consider

1. Hebrews 8:6 refers to Jesus as a *Mediator*. What is the significance of this title given to Jesus? What does Christ do within this role?
2. In what ways is the New Covenant different from the Old Covenant? Do you think that the word *superior* is appropriate to use when comparing the Old Covenant from the New Covenant? Why?
3. Hebrews 8:13 says that the Old Covenant is “obsolete and outdated”. In what ways does Jesus’ New Covenant render the Old Covenant obsolete and outdated? Why does this matter to us today?